



File Code: 1580

Date: November 28, 2012

Mark Lere
Habitat Protection Bureau
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Dear Mark,

I would like to offer the support of the Lolo National Forest for Trout Unlimited's application for a Future Fisheries Improvement Grant to implement mine reclamation work on Kennedy Creek. Previously awarded grants to Trout Unlimited were instrumental in planning and implementation efforts for mine reclamation and fisheries improvements in the Ninemile and Sixmile Creek drainages, including Mattie V Creek (2010), St. Louis Creek (2010-2011), Sixmile Creek (2011) and Twin Creek (2012).

The current grant request is for implementation of mine reclamation efforts on Kennedy Creek, a tributary to Ninemile Creek. The proposed project area is located within the Kennedy Creek Mining District and includes two abandoned hard rock mine sites known as the Lost Cabin and Nugget mines. The area was mined for lead-zinc ore starting in the 1930s, leaving a legacy of hazardous waste rock with elevated concentrations of heavy metals. Waste rock is in direct contact with the creek and is actively eroding, affecting water quality, stream function and habitat, and aquatic species. We are currently working in partnership with Missoula County and Trout Unlimited to reclaim the Kennedy Creek mine complex. The project area is abandoned mine land being reclaimed using CERCLA authority. The Nugget and Lost Cabin mines are listed on Montana's priority Abandoned Mine Lands list and described on the Department of Environmental Quality's abandoned mine website.

The previous grants have funded completion of several projects that will serve as templates for the proposed work, and have resulted in mine waste removal, reconnected tributaries and improved fish passage, increased surface water flow throughout the year, and functional streams and floodplains with native vegetation recovery. These are excellent reclamation projects that compliment both ongoing and successfully completed work in the Ninemile watershed. Funds from the Future Fisheries Improvement Program are essential to completing these on the ground reclamation projects and would help this collaborative group in completing an ambitious watershed scale plan to remediate mining impacts in the area. Therefore, the Forest Service strongly supports this grant application. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH L. R. AUSTIN
Forest Supervisor

cc: Aubree Benson

